

1876.]

607

[Gabb.

accidental discovery at rare intervals, of a half-rotten trunk in the woods. 824
It is prized principally for its color, which is between that of old mahogany and rosewood, and which is probably in part due to seasoning, or to some change in the heart, consequent on the decomposition of the surface. When an Indian finds one of these sticks, he marks the spot, but dares not take possession immediately. He must purify himself by a [743] three days fast before he can begin work on it. It is believed that these sticks are under the protection of a poisonous snake, and if the person has not properly prepared himself, the guardian will revenge the outrage by biting him.

The privileged classes, apart from the chiefs, are three. Two of these are hereditary. The *U-se'-ka-ra* is a sort of high priest, and is of nearly as great importance in the eyes of the people as the chief. In fact, the time was, and not very long ago either, when the chiefs themselves made journeys to visit him as supplicants. The present incumbent is a youth of perhaps twenty-five years of age, and is not yet full fledged. His predecessor, his father, died recently, and, until after the funeral feast, he cannot enter fully into the exercise of his functions. The family lives far back in the hills of Ocucaar, and, although a member of that despised tribe, has from time immemorial held undisputed sway over both it and the Iri-bris. 565) 793

The former *U-se'-ka-ra* was very arrogant, and would hold no communication with foreigners. He claimed supernatural powers, and held frequent interviews with spirits. On these occasions he went alone to a cave, several miles from his house, and spent days together there. On his return he would not converse even with his own family. Nobody but his familiar, now a very old man, was allowed to serve him, or even to speak to him for a certain number of days after his return from one of these mysterious journeys. He rarely traveled about, or visited his neighbors. He lived by levying contributions on the people, or by voluntary presents. His only beverage was chocolate, and the cacao was contributed as voluntary gifts from people far and near. If he entered a house, and offered to buy, or expressed even admiration for anything, whether a chicken, a pig, or any other object, it was at once presented to him. It was considered as good as forfeited. If not presented, it would be sure to die anyhow, and his ill-will would be gained besides. In case of any public calamity, like an epidemic disease, or a scarcity of food from drought, the chief only must visit him, and beg his intercessions with the spirits. He would pay no attention to private appeals. In case he felt inclined to be gracious, he would retire to his cave, and in due time after order a fast. The young man who now holds the position, is one of the finest looking men in the country. He is tall and well formed, his good-natured looking face bears an expression of seriousness hardly in keeping with his youth; and his whole bearing is grave and impressive. I was forcibly struck by his manner, being so strongly in contrast with the light-hearted, talkative character of most of the people. When in

[P. 35(B)]

SA19 Talamanca SA19

Bribri
Cabecar

765 sacrificing of a military macaw (*Ara militaris*)
 782 over the grave.
 825

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

614 certain clans still controls and, keeps ritual
 423 property. This consists of drums or gold pre-
 756 Columbian figures (see Myths: *Clan Protec-*
 423 tors). Formerly the *usegLa* administered jus-
 627 tice within the clan. Now the medicine man
 692 sometimes assumes this role although the most
 681 usual method is for the family of the culprit
 184 to take matters into their own hands. In ex-
 423 treme cases such as a sexual offense within the
 clan or murder, poison is given or the offender
 is buried alive. On the Pacific slope, land
 tenure by individual clans disappears. Three
 or two groups, as the case may be, settle in
 a given section such as Cabagra or China
 Kichá, and own land as a single unit.

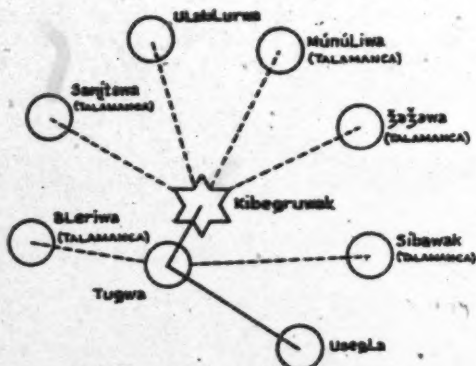
These people know, however, of their
 Talamancan counterparts and keep as a goal
 484 the idea of visiting, at least to know personally,
 184 the home site of their clan on the Caribbean
 402 watershed. Clan-owned ritual property does
 692 not appear on the Pacific. The family unit
 on this side has been known to administer
 justice, but this task is usually left to the Costa
 Rican civil authorities in the nearest center.

614 Gabb does not seem to have considered the
 114 clans, rather he makes a distinction in social
 565 classes,¹¹⁶ indicating the Cabécar *usegLa*, or
 793 high priest, as the spiritual head of both Bribri
 643 and Cabécar, while the temporal ruler was
 Bribri. This lay head was known as the "King"
 and tradition holds that there were two clans
 of "Kings." These were not inter-marriageable.

Only one clan of these remains today (see
 Non-Documental History of Talamanca). The
 793 Indians recount that the most powerful indi-
 692 vidual was the *usegLa* who spoke both Bribri
 and Cabécar. It is said that complaints were
 passed from the "King" to him for decisive
 action. On such occasions, he retired to a
 secret and sacred cave which had much *pita*
 (see Fibers) at the entrance. There he had
 sacred jaguars known as "dogs" and snakes at
 his command. The last *usegLa* is supposed to
 have died from smallpox during the first half
 of the 20th century. The clan of the *usegLa*
 still exists, however, in the upper Coen, Tala-

[114]
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[P 36(A)]

Bribri
Cabécar614
582

a. Nine Cabécar clans and their marriage relationships.

[128]

Key to the Diagrams of Clan Marriage Privileges and Relationships
Prepared by Dr. Gustavo Santoro, University of Costa Rica

The circles bear the name of the different clans.

All are found on both sides of the range except those indicated by the name Talamanca.

The complete lines which unite the center of the circles and the star represent the possibility of marriage between clan members of both sex.

The dotted lines leaving the center of a circle signify a clan whose males can marry women in the
[Text continues middle of p. 36(B)--Analyst]

manca, and on the Pacific slope. This clan does not accept Christian baptism nor marriage, remaining socially aloof.

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[565] Indeed, we found that the clans and the professions connected with them functioned in a sense as social classes (see The Medicine Man). This is characteristic also in the elaborate ritual associated with death (see Death, Funeral, and Bone Burial). Certain clans are still associated with professional or social standing¹¹⁷ (see The Medicine Man and The Singers) or with given trades, for example, among the Bribri the *durúwak* are noted for their hammocks and carrying bags. The *uniwak* made pottery and it is said that in the Lari region they still do. Likewise, food tabus are

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[43]¹¹⁷ The *saLuwak* and *tanawiwak* were associated with the Kings as well as the *Awpanak*.